

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0603

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TRIESTE 0045

E.O.: 11652; GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJ: THE PSI IN THE VENETO AND FRIULI: CAUGHT IN
THE SQUEEZE

REF: ROME 1746

1. SUMMARY. WEAKENED BY ITS MEDIOCRE SHOWING IN THE 1975 AND 1976 ELECTIONS, THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PSI) IN THE VENETO AND FRIULI SEES ITSELF BEING SQUEEZED BETWEEN AND AT THE MERCY OF THE DC AND THE PCI. ACCORDING TO THE YOUNG LOCAL SOCIALIST LEADERS THIS IS A RESULT OF THE OLD INEPT ROME LEADERSHIP BASED ON "CORRENTI" POLITICS. THUS, THEY ARE TRYING TO CHANGE THINGS AND TO SOME EXTENT HAVE DONE SO. CONCURRENTLY, THE PSI IS ALERT TO ALL LEVELS TO ANY POSSIBLE MOVE BY THE DC AND PCI TO STRIKE A DEAL OVER THE HEADS OF THE OTHERS -- A REOCCURRING

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PSI NIGHTMARE. AND IT SEEKS TO HEAD OFF ANY SUCH DEVELOPMENT BY A VARIETY OF SEEMINGLY CONTRADICTIONARY TACTICS. MEANWHILE IT ASPIRES TO A ROLE AS A LEADER OF THE EUROPEAN LEFT. SEEN FROM THE NORTHEAST, THE PSI IS IN FULL FERMENT. IT IS A YEASTY MIX WHICH MIGHT WELL WEAKEN FURTHER RATHER THAN STRENGTHEN THE PSI IN THE ALL IMPORTANT SHORT RUN. THE YOUNG SAY THE "CORRENTI" ARE DEAD BUT THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN; THE OLD WAYS DIE HARD. AT A MINIMUM, HOWEVER, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT
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THE OLD PARTY CHIEFTAINS CAN NO LONGER GUARANTEE DELIVERY FOR THE TIME BEING OF THE PROVINCIAL/REGIONAL VOTE WHICH IN ITSELF HAS ENORMOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR THINGS ITALIAN. END SUMMARY.

2. OF THE PSI'S THREE AND A HALF MILLION VOTES (9.6 PCT OF THE TOTAL VOTE) IN THE 1976 ELECTIONS, THE VENETO AND THE FRIULI ACCOUNTED FOR 400,000 OF THEM. THE PSI IS SOMEWHAT

WEAKER IN THE VENETO (8.3 PCT OF THE VOTE IN 1976) THAN IN THE FRIULI (11 PCT). DC AND PCI GAINS WERE CLEARLY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PSI AND THE SMALL LAY PARTIES. AS A RESULT, THE PSI CANNOT REALISTICALLY ASPIRE TO POWER WITHOUT ONE OR THE OTHER OF THE BIG PARTIES. MOREOVER, IT TREATS WITH BOTH

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FROM AN EVER WEAKENING POSITION.

3. IT IS CAUGHT IN A SQUEEZE AND KNOWS IT. FRUSTRATION, DISAPPOINTMENT AND IMPOTENCY HAVE PROVOKED THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS INTO OPEN REVOLT IN THE NORTHEAST WHO NOW COMMAND A MAJORITY IN THE REGIONAL PARTY COUNCILS. THEIR GOAL IS SURVIVAL OF THE PSI WHICH SEEMS TO EXCLUDE AN "A PRIORI" ALLIANCE WITH THE PCI (THEY SEEM TO BE AUTONOMISTS FOR THE MOST PART) BUT ONE WHICH SEEMS TO DICTATE AN INCREASINGLY OPPORTUNISTIC STANCE.

4. IN THE VENETO, ALL SEVEN PROVINCIAL PSI CONGRESSES ELECTED NEW SECRETARIATS WHOSE MAJORITIES ARE SUPPOSEDLY UNBEHOLDEN TO ANY OF THE OLD "CORRENTI". THE VENETO PSI IS LED BY THE YOUNG, SPECIFICALLY REGIONAL SECRETARY MONESI AND NEWLY ELECTED DEPUTY GIANNI DE MICHELIS -- A VENETIAN AND A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR WHOSE FAMILY OWNS A PUBLISHING FIRM IN VENICE. THE LATTER IS TOUTED AS THE NEW SOCIALIST LEADER OF THE VENETO.

5. THE FRIULI HAS YET TO HOLD ITS PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES WHICH WERE POSTPONED BECAUSE OF THE EARTHQUAKE. THEY WILL PROBABLY BE SCHEDULED FOR LATE SPRING. NEVERTHELESS, THE
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FRIULI PSI IS ALREADY IN THE HANDS OF THE YOUNG, INCLUDING REGIONAL SECRETARY RENZULLI, PSI REGIONAL FLOOR LEADER ZANFAGNINI AND NEWLY-ELECTED TRIESTE PROVINCIAL SECRETARY TRINGALE. THEIR IMMEDIATE TARGET IS THE OLD BOY NETWORK HEADED BY LORIS FORTUNA AND TO SOME EXTENT FRIULI REGIONAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT PITTONI.

6. AS A PRACTICAL MATTER THE CHANGES MEAN THAT LOCAL NEEDS ARE NO LONGER SERVICED BY THE "CAPI CORRENTI". INSTEAD, ALL SUCH MATTERS ARE NOW FUNNELED THROUGH FORMER MILAN MAYOR ANIASI TO THE NATIONAL SECRETARIAT. IN BOTH THE VENETO AND FRIULI, REGIONAL LEADERS SAY THEY SUPPORT THE NATIONAL SECRETARIAT AND ITS POLICIES WHICH APPARENTLY MEANS CRAXI AS LONG AS HE CAN CONTROL THE MAJORITY IN ROME. NOEN. CONT'D

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TRIESTE 0045

E.I.: 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJ: THE PSI IN THE VENETO AND FRIULI: CAUGHTS IN
THE SQUEEZE
REF: ROME 1746
7. ACCORDING TO THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS IN THE NORTHEAST, THE
OLD CORRENTI ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PRESENT SAD STATE OF
PSI AFFAIRS AND FOR THAT REASON HAVE BEEN ABOLISHED. THAT
IS DEBATABLE SINCE THE PATRONAGE CONTROLLED BY THE OLD
LEADERS IS STILL A POTENT WEAPON IN THEIR HANDS. ALSO AS
THE LOCAL PSI ORGANIZATIONS STRENGTHEN THEMSELVES AT THE
EXPENSE OF ROME SOME SORT OF REACTION FROM THE NATIONAL
LEADERSHIP WOULD NOT BE UNEXPECTED. IN FACT, CRAXI IS DUE
TO ATTEMPT A PSI VENETO MEETING ON FEBRUARY 20.

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8. FROM ITS WEAKENED POSITION, THE PSI SEES A DC-PCI DEAL
OVER THE HEADS OF THE OTHERS AS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY.
IT IS PARTICULARLY SUSPICIOUS OF THE DC IN THIS REGARD. TO
HEAD OFF ANY SUCH MOVEMENT, THE PSI RESORTS TO AN ARRAY
OF SEEMINGLY QUIXOTIC TACTICS AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.
A FURTHER REAL OR PERCEIVED WEAKENING OF THE PSI WILL UN-
DOUBTEDLY STIMULATE FURTHER ERRATIC BEHAVIOR OF THAT PARTY.
9. IN VIEW OF ITS DESULTORY ELECTORAL SHOWING IN 1975 AND 1976, THE
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PSI SEEMS TO BE PINNING ITS HOPES FOR SURVIVAL AS A MAJOR ITALIAN

POLITICAL FORCE ON THE OUTCOME OF THE 1978 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS. AS SUCH IT ASPIRES TO A ROLE AS A LEADER OF THE EUROPEAN LEFT WITHIN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN WHICH THE PCI'S POWER WOULD BE DILUTED. (THIS MAY BE BEHIND THE PROPOSAL OF BIENNALE PRESIDENT CARLO RIPA DI MEANA (PSI) TO HAVE THE 1977 BIENNALE FOCUS ON DISSENT IN EASTERN EUROPE). SUCH THINKING DISTRACTS THE PSI FROM ITS MAIN CHANCE OF REMAINING A MAJOR ITALIAN PARTY AND IT SEEMS TO IGNORE THE FACT THAT THE PCI HAS BEEN RUNNING HARD FOR THE 1978 ELECTIONS FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS.

10. COMMENT: THE PSI'S IMMEDIATE GOAL IS SURVIVAL. IT

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SEEKS TO DO SO BY A PATCHWORK OF TACTICS AT HOME WHICH ARE TO ENSURE ITS RELEVANCY TO ANY GOVERNMENT COMBINATION. IT SEEKS TO BOLSTER ITS CLAIM TO POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN ITALY BY CARVING OUT A ROLE FOR ITSELF AS A LEADER OF THE EUROPEAN LEFT. SUCH EFFORTS ARE MEANT TO BE COMPLEMENTARY BUT THE PSI SEEMS TO BE CONFUSING RATHER THAN CLARIFYING THE ISSUES AND IN THE PROCESS ERODING THE CONFIDENCE OF ITS PRESENT AND POTENTIAL SUPPORTERS. IF THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS DO NOT PRODUCE IN THE SHORT RUN, THE OLD PARTY CHIEFTAINS, AT LEAST IN THE NORTHEAST, MAY GET ANOTHER CHANCE.

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